

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MDRAPER:PDW

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NEA:ALATHERTON, JR.

S/S -FVORTIZ

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN REACTION TO SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION

1. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR KABBANI CALLED ON UNDER SECRETARY SISCO JANUARY 28 UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO DESCRIBE SYRIAN "UNHAPPINESS" WITH U.S. VETO OF SC RES ON MIDDLE EAST. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON WAS PRESENT.

2. KABBANI EXPLAINED THAT SYRIA WAS UNHAPPY WITH U.S. ACTION SINCE IT WOULD NOT HELP THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS. SYRIA CONSIDERED THAT ARAB GOVERNMENTS HAD MADE SPECIAL EFFORTS TO TAKE A MODERATE AND ACCOMMODATING LINE. THE PALESTINIANS IN FACT HAD GONE TO THE FARTHEST POINT POSSIBLE FOR THEM IN TRYING FOR A COMPROMISE. AMBASSADOR THOUGHT THAT JAN 28 WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL RE THE STRENGTHENED POSITION OF PLO AFTER SC DEBATE CONSTITUTED A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THE REAL SITUATION.

3. CONTINUING, THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE U.S. VETO, SYRIA DID NOT KNOW WHERE THE PARTIES WOULD NEXT MOVE. SYRIA WANTED TO ACHIEVE PEACE, BUT WAS CONVINCED THAT ORATORY ALONE WAS INEFFECTIVE.

4. SYRIA VIEWED THE VETOED RESOLUTION AS INTENDED TO CLARIFY AND COMPLETE EARLIER RESES 242 AND 338 IN A WAY THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE U.S. AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. AFTER ITS EIGHT YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH RES 242, SYRIA HAD DECIDED THAT IT COULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED IN ISOLATION, THANKS TO ISRAELI INFLEXIBILITY, ALTHOUGH SYRIA GENUINELY WANTED IT TO BE IMPLEMENTED. MUST SYRIA WAIT ANOTHER EIGHT OR TEN YEARS FOR PROGRESS, HE ASKED. AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT, AS PRESIDENT ASAD HAD ALWAYS SAID, THE INITIATIVES FOR PEACE HAD TO COME FROM THE U.S. THE TIME IS RIPE TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT AND END HOSTILITIES. SYRIA, HOWEVER, WAS AFRAID THAT ONCE
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AGAIN AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY HAD BEEN LOST. THROUGH THE U.S. ACTION, ISRAEL IS BEING SUSTAINED IN A POSITION FROM WHICH SHE CAN DEFY OR IGNORE ALL SC RESOLUTIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION, AMBASSADOR SARCASTICALLY REFERRED TO THE GENEROUS GESTURE OF THE ISRAELIS IN RECENTLY INVITING DISPLACED LEBANESE CHRISTIANS TO FIND REFUGE IN ISRAEL AND SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE ISRAEL INVITE THE PALESTINIANS TO RETURN.

5. IN CONCLUDING HIS PRESENTATION, THE AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT SYRIA JUDGED THAT A U.S. ABSTENTION WOULD HAVE AT LEAST HELPED PUSH MATTERS FORWARD, BUT THAT THE VETO HAD BROUGHT ALL PAST MOVEMENT TO A STANDSTILL.

6. IN REPLY MR. SISCO SAID THAT HE WELCOMED THE MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR BECAUSE, DESPITE PRESENT SYRIAN DIS-APPOINTMENT, IT WAS NECESSARY THAT THE INTIMATE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS THAT HAD DEVELOPED THROUGHOUT PAST MONTHS SHOULD BE CONTINUED. HE THEN OUTLINED TWO MAJOR POINTS:

-- FIRST, THERE REALLY WERE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SYRIA IN THEIR OBJECTIVES. WE BOTH WANTED PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE ON THE BASIS OF RES 242 AND 338. WE BOTH AGREED THAT NO PEACE WOULD BE DURABLE WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF THE PALESTINIANS. AS THE SECRETARY HIMSELF HAD MADE CLEAR, THE PALESTINIANS CONSTITUTED AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL ELEMENT AND THEIR FUTURE WAS CONNECTED WITH THE MAKING OF A PERMANENT PEACE.

-- SECOND, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS WAS A MATTER OF JUDGMENT ON HOW TO REACH OUR PARALLEL OBJECTIVE. WE HAD SAID TO SYRIA--LONG BEFORE THE SC DEBATE--THAT THERE WERE LIMITS BEYOND WHICH WE COULD NOT GO.

AS WE INFORMED SYRIA FROM THE BEGINNING, WE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL

WAS THE PROPER FORUM FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. AS THE SECRETARY HAD INDICATED IN HIS GA 1975 SPEECH, THERE
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WERE OTHER OPTIONS OUTSIDE THE UN, INCLUDING THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, AN INFORMAL PREPARATORY CONFERENCE OF THE PRESENT GENEVA PARTIES, OR SYRIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE US. WHAT IN OUR JUDGMENT WOULD BE UNFEASIBLE IN THE SC CONTEXT MIGHT IN TIME PROVE FEASIBLE OUTSIDE SC FRAMEWORK.

7. MR. SISCO SAID THAT WE UNDERSTAND SYRIAN VIEWS ON THIS MATTER. AT SAME TIME, WE DO NOT SHARE THE JUDGMENT THAT SECURITY COUNCIL DECISION HAS FORECLOSED OR PUT AN END TO THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESSES. ONE REASON FOR THIS PROGRESS, HE CONTINUED, HAD BEEN US INFLUENCE. SAYING HE WAS SPEAKING IN A SPIRIT OF FRANKNESS, MR. SISCO DECLARED THAT THE US WAS NOW IN A MORE EFFECTIVE POSITION TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS OUTSIDE SC IN SEEKING TO PROMOTE PRACTICAL

PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE.

8. MR. SISCO ASKED THE AMBASSADOR, IN REPORTING TO DAMASCUS, TO STRESS OUR JUDGMENT THAT FOR THE US TO HAVE DONE ANYTHING ELSE AT THE SC WOULD HAVE WEAKENED OUR EFFECTIVENESS IN FUTURE PEACE EFFORTS. IT WAS EQUALLY IMPORTANT THAT SYRIA UNDERSTAND, AS THE SECRETARY HAD STATED, THAT THE US DOES NOT FIND A STALEMATE ACCEPTABLE AND WOULD THEREFORE REDOUBLE ITS EFFORTS TO GET FURTHER DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS GOING.

9. MR. ATHERTON ADDED THAT MANY COUNTRIES IN ADDITION TO SYRIA HAD INDICATED THAT IT WAS UP TO THE US TO INITIATE PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT. IN ACCEPTING THE RESPONSIBILITY, WE BELIEVED IT SHOULD ALSO BE UP TO THE US TO DECIDE HOW TO DO THE JOB. MR. ATHERTON SAID THAT THE US HAD MADE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO CONSULT ALL INTERESTED PARTIES AND ENSURE THAT THEY WERE AWARE OF OUR VIEWS ABOUT THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE. HIS TRIP TO THE AREA IN DECEMBER WAS THE INITIAL STEP IN THOSE CONSULTATIONS. NO ONE COULD BE SURPRISED BY WHAT WE FINALLY DID.

10. AMBASSADOR KABBANI AT THIS POINT REITERATED SOME OF HIS EARLIER POINTS, ARGUING THAT ISRAEL WANTED TO KEEP THE PRESENT SITUATION IN STALEMATE FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, BUT THAT THE ARABS AND PALESTINIANS GENUINELY HAD TRIED TO
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BE HELPFUL TO THE U.S. POINT OF VIEW,

11. MR. SISCO REFERRED TO AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN'S REMARKS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE DEBATE ITSELF HAD MADE A CONTRIBUTION TO WIDER UNDERSTANDINGS IN MANY RESPECTS. HE THEN STRESSED THAT, FROM THE WAY THE U.S. SEES ITS OWN

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INTERESTS IN THE AREA, STALEMATE IS INTOLERABLE IN 1976. THE U.S. WILL NOT ACCEPT THE NOTION THAT, IN AN ELECTION YEAR, STAGNATION IS INEVITABLE. THIS REFLECTS THE STRONG FEELING OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY. WHILE OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE DIFFERING VIEWS AS TO THE WAYS TO PROCEED, THE U.S. CONSIDERS IT IMPORTANT THAT SYRIA OR OTHER PARTIES DO NOTHING THAT WOULD TEND TO MAKE FUTURE PROGRESS MORE DIFFICULT. SYRIA SHOULD ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT US WILL REMAIN IN THE FOREFRONT OF EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A LASTING SETTLEMENT. KISSINGER

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